Perceptions about body image of fourth-year female students in FELTE, ULIS, VNU

Nhận định về hình ảnh thân thể của sinh viên nữ năm thứ tư tại khoa sư phạm Anh, ĐHNN, ĐHQGHN

# **ABSTRACT**

Globalization and increasing mobility of Vietnamese in recent decades have resulted in a growing number of Vietnamese women engaging in romantic intercultural relationships. Their intercultural interactions within such intimate relationships might to some extent influence their sense of being Vietnamese. This qualitative study, thus, utilized identity narrative inquiry to explore how three Vietnamese women in romantic intercultural relationships have affiliated with and negotiated their Vietnamese identities. Participants that are diverse in age, length of relationships, and nationality of partner were recruited through my personal connections. Data was collected in in-depth interviews and analyzed based on thematic coding. Participants described different degrees of connection to their Vietnamese values such as family values, the notion of women as homemakers, the notion of women as jealous and controlling, sexual modesty, and protection of Vietnamese identity. Their processes of identity negotiation have been characterized by their acculturation (adoption of new values) and/or transformation (redefinition of their existing beliefs). During their intercultural couplehood, the women have learned new food and eating habits, cultural traditions and practices, English language while negotiating their ideas of gender roles, and directness. On the one hand, the stories consolidate the theory of identity and difference as well as identity as multiple and dynamic. On the other hand, they suggest that a strong sense of Vietnamese identity is a core in each of these women’s identity. It serves as a foundation on which the Vietnamese women have constantly referred back to to make sense of the new ideas and values. The study also raises implications for further research into the strategic role of romantic relationship during emerging adulthood in a person’ identity formation.

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